



Have gavel, will travel: auction house The Cabinet Rooms will open this Friday in The Sorting Office on Westbourne Grove

What am I bid for a new kind of pop-up?

DESIGN

FIRST came the bar, then the restaurant and now here comes the pop-up auction house. In a bid to take the stuffiness out of selling design pieces, dealers and sellers are taking a modern approach.

"Auction houses and galleries can be intimidating for new collectors or buyers who are starting out," explains Philip Thomas, director of The Cabinet Rooms, a pop-up showroom selling antique furniture opening this Friday in The Sorting Office on Westbourne Grove. He hopes that by dropping the "very quiet and very formal" approach that auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christie's have, people will feel more comfortable when browsing.

He is not alone. Nicholas Russell, CEO of We Are Pop Up, which helps business find temporary spaces, says 30 per cent of its current requests have a design element to them.

"Pop-ups give creatively minded people an amazing opportunity to work together and broaden their client base. Someone coming in for that dress or handbag might buy a painting or vase – and vice-versa," says Lance Kuhn of Scantique, which specialises in Scandinavian and Scandi-style design from the Twenties to the Seventies, selling art, glassware, ceramics and furnishings, and is currently retailing out of POP 309, a pop-up shop in the heart of Notting Hill with four clothing traders.

"It's a cost effective way to start direct retail and test your market," says Fanny Shorter, part of the East Wing design collective, a group of young designers formed in Cockpit Arts studio in central London – their design pieces include an eclectic mix of furniture and prints sold out of a unit within Boxpark in Shoreditch.

Meanwhile, The Hungarian Design Pop Up, which creates interior and homeware pieces, joins Boxpark today and will be open from noon to 7pm every Monday. Over in Mayfair The New Craftsmen, a network of craft makers selling British design pieces, sells out of The Garage, allowing customers to commission bespoke designs.

Thomas says the inspiration for his own pop-up auction came about on a buying trip to Copenhagen. Having enjoyed the less intimidating atmosphere of a Danish auction, he set about bringing that feel back to London. The Cabinet Rooms will have a coffee bar and bakery, design and interior book sellers, a florist and vodka and gin at the launch. Sold.

Tim Arbabzadah